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SUBJECT A Bizarre Plot by KGB

DORIS MCMILLON: There is word tonight of a bizarre plot by the Soviet KGB to track Americans in Russia with a chemical, a chemical that may cause cancer.

JIM DYER: Doris, the news surfaced at the State Department early this afternoon that Soviet agents had dusted doorknobs and steering wheels on automobiles with an invisible power.

STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN: The substances in question, which have been applied indirectly to embassy personnel, leave deposits on the person or possessions of people with whom they have had contact.

DYER: State says the chemical had been used sporadically in recent years but it's only been in the past six months that the use of the chemical has become common practice. State officials add that although the substance could potentially cause cancer, there is no evidence to show that any Americans have suffered from exposure to it.

George Carver is an intelligence expert. He served as a deputy for intelligence at the CIA. He is joining us now from the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies in his office. Mr. Carver, glad to have you with us today.

GEORGE CARVER: It's my pleasure.

DYER: First of all, once someone is exposed to this power, we understand the Soviets can trace them. They know exactly where they are going in the city. How does it work?

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CARVER: Well, I'm not an expert and I know only what I've heard today. It's not so much as a hi-tech blood hound, the little fellow running along behind you with an instrument, but the -- if they visit a home, say a dissident's home, their feet go across that dissident's doorway, their hands grasp that dissident's doorknob, and you can tell where they have been, though not necessarily follow them as they are going there.

DYER: So from a tracking standpoint, it's not so much of knowing exactly where they are right at the moment but perhaps where they have been instead.

CARVER: It's proving conclusively where some American or American official has been. And, for example, if you have a dissident who was foolish enough to take basket three (?) of the Helsinki Agreement seriously, and the KGB is cracking down on him and doesn't want him seeing Americans, they can have proof positive that one has been to his apartment.

DORIS MCMILLON: Mr. Carver, why do you think the Russians started using this substance so much in the past six months and how long has it been in use?

CARVER: Well, I don't know precisely how long it's been in use. Apparently for a number years.

The Soviets are very paranoid about foreigners, particularly about foreign officials, and, above all, about Americans. They have always used hi-tech counter-intelligence and espionage, so the fact that they would do it with power is no surprise.

You've got to remember that for years, during the middle and late 1970s, they bathe the embassy -- our embassy in high intensity microwave radiation which was also dangerous to people's health, so that they could monitor our conversations and our communications.

MCMILLON: Are we using anything like this?

CARVER: No. We would not use things like this for a variety of reasons. First place, to implant it you have to completely control the turf the way they control our embassy, which is also the residence of most of the people who work there. The janitors, the guards, the electricians, the maintenance men, all work for the KGB.

Also, we have moral and ethical and other requirements inhibitions against using things of this nature. But the Soviets don't have to file -- the KGB files no environmental impact statements. There is no FDA to worry about in the Soviet Union, and they don't care what Ralph Nader thinks.

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DYER: Mr. Carver, quickly before we go, why did the State Department choose this particular time to suddenly announce this, that the powder is, in effect, being used, if it's been going on for months before?

CARVER: Well, I think that they were waiting for an accumulation of medical evidence. And my belief is that probably enough medical evidence came in that they felt they had to warn the Americans, both official and non-official, who could be affected, and hence had no choice but to make a public announcement. I don't think they picked the timing or even desired it.

DYER: All right. Mr. Carver, thank you very much for being with us today. As we said, former Deputy Director for Intelligence at the CIA.